



# HARMONY ALLIANCE

MIGRANT & REFUGEE WOMEN FOR CHANGE

**Submission to Office for Women, Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, regarding the 63<sup>rd</sup> Session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women**  
***Social protection systems, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls;***

The Harmony Alliance: Migrant and Refugee Women for Change notes the importance of social protections in fostering equitable societies and promoting equality and non-discrimination. Women in particular experience vulnerabilities and structural inequalities that reduce their full participation in society and create barriers to their empowerment. Women migrants, refugee women and ethnic minority women are subject to intersecting and compounding barriers, including discrimination at all levels of society, which can leave them at greater risk of poverty and homelessness. For this reason, the Harmony Alliance advocates for States to ensure that migrant, refugee and ethnic minority women have equitable access to social protection systems, public services and sustainable infrastructure. In particular, we call on the Australian Government to advocate at the 63<sup>rd</sup> Session of CSW for all States to:

1. Strengthen normative frameworks, ratify and take actions to meet obligations under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.
2. Adopt the International Labour Organization's Labour standards on Social Protection Floors, including ratifying relevant conventions C102, C118 and C157, and implementing recommendations R202.
3. Ensure all women, regardless of their migration status, citizenship status, or ethnicity, are empowered to exercise their human rights and fundamental freedoms through safe access to basic services without discrimination, including:
  - Minimum levels of income security, above poverty levels;
  - Paid maternity care and affordable child care;
  - Gender-based violence services;
  - Affordable and independent legal assistance;
  - Essential health care services, including maternity care; and
  - Assistance to find decent paid employment.
4. Protect women migrants against all forms of exploitation and abuse, including by:
  - 4.1 Ensuring all relevant national labour laws, employment policies and programmes include considerations of the specific needs and contributions of women migrant workers, especially in domestic work and lower-skilled occupations;
  - 4.2 Adopting specific measures to prevent, report, address and provide effective remedy for all forms of exploitation and abuse, including sexual and gender-based violence, child marriage and trafficking; and

4.3 Ensuring migration status is not a deterrent to victims/survivors reporting gender-based violence.

5. Build the capacity of social protection systems and services to enable women migrants and refugee women access to such systems and services without discrimination or impediment on the basis of migration status, citizenship status, ethnicity and language spoken.
6. Adequately resource specialist civil society organisations (CSOs) operating at the intersection of gender and cultural concerns and National Human Rights Institutions to ensure delivery systems of services are inclusive and empowering of migrant and refugee women and ethnic minority women.